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# Ford says staff shakedown won't weaken U.S. defense

By Aldo Beckman

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BOSTON — President Ford emphasized Friday that the personnel shifts he made earlier in the week do not signal any change in American policies. He pledged that he will not tolerate any "softness or weakness" in defense policies.

"The national security policy of this country is that weakness invites war, that strength is the only sure foundation for peace, and that America in concert with our allies must maintain a defense capability second to none," Ford told a group of New England business and political leaders at the first

New England Conference in Boston. "That policy has not changed and will not change."

Ford, obviously concerned about efforts by Sen. Henry Jackson (D., Wash.) and other Democratic presidential aspirants to make a campaign issue out of the firing of Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger and the nomination of Donald Rumsfeld to the post, said there "is no struggle between the concepts of defense and detente."

"WE HAVE BEEN pursuing both," he said, "but to make detente succeed, we must have strong defense. We make the world safer by both policies."

Ford defended Rumsfeld as a man

"whose dedication to a strong defense policy was amply demonstrated in the Congress and as our representative to NATO."

He said that Rumsfeld and CIA Director-designate George Bush "will be strong, tough, and true to the highest interests of all the people of the United States."

In an apparent dig at Jackson, Ford told the New England leaders that "it is very easy to be a cold warrior — especially in peace time."

"But it would be irresponsible for a President to engage in confrontations when consultations would advance the cause of peace," he said.

He said he will continue to seek a "meaningful arms agreement," but said that it must be a two-way agreement, with "credible strength of our own and in concert with our allies."

"WE WILL NOT be hurried into a bad agreement," Ford said. "Any agreement we reach must be verifiable."

"No nation can preserve its national interests unless it can defend them," Ford said. "The time when America could spend one or two years gearing up for war is gone forever."

Promising to take whatever steps are necessary to see that America's defenses remain second to none, Ford "deplored" congressional action that would cut \$7 billion out of his \$97.8 billion request for Department of Defense appropriations. He said that if current trends in cutting defense spending should continue to 2000, the U.S. defense, by mathematical projections, would be reduced to "one soldier carrying one rifle — just like the statue at Concord Bridge."

"RECKLESS CONGRESSIONAL action to cripple the effectiveness of our intelligence services in legitimate operations could be catastrophic," Ford said. "Our potential adversaries and even some of our friends operate in all intelligence fields with secrecy, skill, and substantial resources. What we need is an American intelligence capacity second to none."

Ford stopped en route here at Springfield, Mass., to speak briefly to a conference of New England editors.

At Springfield, several hundred persons turned out at Westover Air Force Base to greet the President. He shook a number of hands as he walked along the crowd, and was struck on the side of the head by a child waving a flag.

Ford ducked to try to avoid the stick, but he was grazed slightly.